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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KUWAIT 003099

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/01/2016
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [PREL](#) [PGOC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [KU](#) [MEDIA](#) [REACTION](#)
SUBJECT: TFLE01: A PRESS WAR OF WORDS ON NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
BACKLASH AGAINST U.S. OVER QANA

REF: A. KUWAIT 3057 (NOTAL)
[1](#)B. KUWAIT 2855

Classified By: CDA Matt Tueller for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary and comment: The Kuwaiti press printed August 1 virulent and anti-U.S. comments made by MPs. One Arabic daily headlined its front page with a paraphrase of one statement: "Americans and Israelis are SOBs and Bastards." While previously relatively balanced in its news coverage, local press set a different tone on August 1st with the most overtly anti-U.S. coverage by the Kuwaiti print media since the start of hostilities. Opinion pieces in the Kuwaiti press are overwhelmingly critical of perceived U.S. complicity in the violence in Lebanon, but some anti-Hizballah and pro-U.S. opinions continue to appear as well. The Kuwaiti Journalists Association called on the media to continue to support Lebanon and reveal the "cruel" Israeli attacks on the Lebanese people. The vitriol suggests the difficulty the GOK faces in acknowledging the outrage of the public while directing it away from Arab governments and preventing the Lebanese conflict from widening. A number of August 2 op-eds criticized the harshness of the Kuwaiti MPs' rhetoric. End summary and comment.

[1](#)2. (U) The Kuwaiti Arabic and English press on August 1 printed vitriolic comments against the U.S. from Kuwaiti Members of Parliament (MPs), many of whom attacked U.S. policy in Lebanon following the Israeli attack on Qana. Of the five Arab-language dailies, all but one covered the parliamentary comments on inside pages. Al-Watan, however, headlined the comments on its front page, paraphrasing pro-Iran MP Adnan Abdulsamad as part of its banner heading: "Americans and Israelis are SOBs and Bastards." (Note: MP Samad has played a role in the two demonstrations outside the U.S. Embassy (reftels). End note.) His comments stem from a special parliamentary session scheduled to address a budget issue. During the session, Acting Speaker Ahmad Al-Mulaifi read a statement condemning the Qana incident and calling on the international community to stop the violence. Islamist MP Khaled Al-Adwa rejected the statement as too bland, saying the "U.S. is complicit in the spilling of children's blood in Lebanon... Condoleezza Rice's visit to the region was preceded by the bombs she sent to the Zionist entity... America is a foul, filthy pit... Its policymakers are SOBs." Al-Watan prominently featured a list of other statements, with the most virulent coming from Islamist-leaning MPs:

-- Jamal Al-Kandari, a member of the Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM): "It's truly a crusader war as Bush stated... The Arab regimes are incapable of helping Lebanon because of

their collaboration with the U.S. administration... We are speaking to those in the Arab organizations who are humiliating their peoples in order to safeguard their interests."

-- Musallam Al-Barrak, an independent yet conservative MP and proponent of electoral reform: "It is a scandal for the Arab people, and Hassan Nasrallah has come at a time of humiliation of the honor of the Arab nation... Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiyya are doing the best broadcasting of the truth, whereas Kuwait TV is broadcasting drumming and dancing."

-- Dr. Ali Al-Omari, a Salafi Islamist: "The Israeli aggression is not surprising. What is surprising is the weak Arab stance."

-- Daifallah Fadhel Bouramiya, a conservative Islamist, congratulated Nasrallah on repulsing the Israelis, something that "the other Arab bodies were not able to do in confronting the crusader wars".

-- Saleh Ashour, an independent and moderate Shi'a: "What is happening is a disgrace for the Arab governments and no one can stop the plan except Hizballah and Hamas."

-- Hussain Al-Mutairi, elected to Parliament for the first time on June 29: "It's a shame for the Arab people whose leaders have collaborated with the Zionists and America."

-- Adnan Abdul Samad: "Condoleezza Rice is a 'wood carrier' (a reference to the Quranic verse in which a female relative of Mohammad was fated to hell for bringing wood to burn the Prophet at the stake)." He further claimed that she said the killing of children was a normal matter which "reveals

KUWAIT 00003099 002 OF 003

something inside her because she is a spinster whom the train has passed by and who is incapable of motherly feelings."

-- Abdullah Al-Roumi, an independent five-time MP: "America exports terror and condemns it at the same time."

-- Ahmad Baqer, a Salafi MP and former Justice Minister and Awqaf Minister: "Where are the preparations by Muslims for war as recommended by Islam?"

-- Ahmad Lari, a new MP: "We say to you (the American Ambassador) that from this day forward you are not welcome at our diwanis (discussion salons), especially during Ramadan." (Note: Lari like Abdul Samad, is affiliated with the National Islamic Alliance, a conservative Iran-leaning association. He too was involved at recent demonstrations staged outside the U.S. Embassy. End note.)

-- Hassan Jowhar, a pro-reform Shi'a MP: "A curse on Arab leaders who are American henchmen and whose fate is the trash bin of history."

-- Ahmad Saadoun, an independent MP and former Speaker of Parliament: "Extreme right Zionists in America are behind what is happening."

-- Hussein Al-Huraiti, a parliamentary newcomer, stated he would not blame the Arab people if they revolted against their rulers.

Similar quotes were reported on the inside pages of other issues. The English-language daily Kuwait Times covered the session in its front page with the headline "MPs Slam America over Lebanon War."

13. (C/NF) Comment: The anger directed toward Arab governments by parliamentarians is particularly striking. Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Ismail Al-Shatti responded to the parliamentarians' statements by saying that the Government agreed with everything that had been said

except for the criticism of friendly countries. This illustrates the quandary in which Arab regimes find themselves. Arab governments want to be seen as in step with the anger of the Arab street while, at the same time, they understand the need for maintaining good relations with the U.S. This duality is further illustrated by a very collegial meeting that PolOff had with Islamist MP Khodair Al-Enezi on July 29, the day before the Qana bombing. Al-Enezi implored the U.S. to intervene on behalf of Kuwait's stateless residents because it was the guardian of human rights in the region. Two days later, he was on the National Assembly floor calling for a boycott of American products and lambasting the U.S. for what "Israel and America are doing in Lebanon". End comment.

14. (SBU) While the Kuwaiti press has shown sympathy for Lebanon in its coverage of the hostilities, its news reporting, as opposed to its opinion pieces, has been comparatively balanced. The U.S. position, including quotes from Secretary Rice and President Bush -- taken largely from wire services -- appears in news reports. August 1st coverage of MP speeches struck a different chord and is the most overt anti-U.S. reporting since the start of hostilities. The Kuwait Journalists Association (KJA) on July 30 took a stand on events in Lebanon when it issued a statement condemning Israeli aggression and calling on the "superpowers" to intervene to stop the killing in Lebanon. The KJA also asked the Kuwaiti media to continue supporting Lebanon and to reveal the "cruel" Israeli attacks on the Lebanese people.

15. (SBU) Opinion pieces in all the press continue to paint Israel as the sole aggressor. Hizballah is more often than not portrayed as a defender of Arab life and dignity. But this is not exclusively the case. The Editor-in-chief of the Arabic daily Al-Seyassah wrote August 1, "Right now, the war in Lebanon is an extension of the disputes between Syria and Iran against the United States. Therefore we call on the United States to beat the snake's head Iran, and not its tail represented by Iraq and Lebanon... America will not succeed in turning Lebanon into another Iraq, and Tehran and Damascus will not succeed in jeopardizing the international will to contain this war." Furthermore, a number of August 2nd opinion pieces pointedly criticized Parliament for acting on emotions rather than in tones befitting statesmen. Zibin

KUWAIT 00003099 003 OF 003

Hamad Al-Badhal took special exception to the personal attacks on Condoleezza Rice. He went on to note that August 2nd is the sixteenth anniversary of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and that Kuwaitis would still be under his rule were it not for the U.S. Muhammad Al-Mulaifi reported in Al-Seyassah that someone who viewed the protests at the U.S. Embassy afterwards went to the mall where he saw hanging out the same young people who an hour before had been chanting "Death to America."

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